

VZCZCXRO9487
OO RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW
DE RUEHNE #1321/01 1770615
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 260615Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7132
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7803
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3540
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 6569
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1806
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1394
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8237
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8440
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001321

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IN](#) [KDEM](#) [KOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [KTIP](#) [ELAB](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RESOURCE, LABOR, AND WOMEN/CHILD DEVELOPMENT
MINISTRIES GO TO CONGRESS LOYALISTS

REF: NEW DELHI 1245

11. (U) The Congress Party appointed three party loyalists to positions in the Human Resource Development, Labor, and Women/Child Development Ministries.

Sibal: Experienced Lawyer and Politician Takes Helm at Human Resource Development

12. (U) Kapil Sibal was sworn into the cabinet on May 22 and assigned to be Minister of Human Resource Development later that month. A noted Supreme Court lawyer, he represents the famous Chandi Chowk constituency in Delhi. He was first elected to the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) in 1998. He was appointed Minister for Science and Technology and Ocean Development in 2004 and visited India's research station in Antarctica during his tenure. A strong advocate of U.S-India relations, he has served as the co-chair of the Indo-U.S. Parliamentary Forum in the past. Sibal joined the Bar in 1972, has been Additional Solicitor General of India twice (1989-90 and 1995-1997), In 1991, he headed the Indian delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. He also served as spokesperson for the Congress party during the 1999 and 2004 parliamentary elections.

13. (U) Sibal is an expert on Indian constitutional law who has participated in several high-profile cases before the Supreme Court and served as president of the Supreme Court Bar Association three times. He was born August 8, 1948 to Punjabi Hindu parents in Jalandhar and is a graduate of the prestigious St. Stephens College in New Delhi. He also holds a L.L.M. degree from Harvard Law School. His wife passed away in June 2000, and he has two sons who are also attorneys. His brother Kanwal Sibal was a former Foreign Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.

Kharge: Seasoned Politician Debuts on National Stage as Labor Minister

14. (SBU) Mallikarjun M. Kharge was born July 21, 1942 into a Dalit family. A follower of Dalit leaders B.R. Ambedkar and

Shyam Sunder, he participated in social and trade union activities. He practiced law before entering the political arena. Although a new member of the Lok Sabha, Kharge won repeated elections from Gurmitkal assembly constituency in Karnataka from 1972 to 2004. He has been loyal to the Congress Party and kept himself away from political controversies. He narrowly missed becoming Karnataka's Chief Minister in 1999 and 2004. He gave up his position as Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly to run for parliament this year. He is close to current External Affairs Minister Krishna since he served as Karnataka's Home Minister when Krishna was the state's Chief Minister. Consulate Chennai reports that as Home Minister, Kharge seemed hesitant to meet with diplomats and usually was reluctant to talk about anything substantive when he did meet with them. He is married to Radha Bai Kharge and has two daughters and three sons. Kharge speaks Hindi, Kannada, and English.

Tirath: Forceful Loyalist from the Capital Assumes Command at Women and Child Development

15. (U) On May 30, Krishna Tirath, 54, assumed her charge as the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Women and Child Development. Tirath comes from an old family of Congress loyalists and began her career in 1985 in the Delhi State Legislative Assembly. She was Minister for Social Welfare, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and Labour and Employment in the first Sheila Dikshit cabinet in 1998 and became the Deputy Speaker in the state assembly in 2003.

NEW DELHI 00001321 002 OF 002

Observers complimented Tirath for her ability to hold her own in Dikshit's circle of power. Currently in her second term in the Lok Sabha, Tirath represents the Karol Bagh constituency of Delhi. Tirath told media outlets that her first priority as minister is to pass initiatives to empower adolescent girls aged 11 to 18 years. She also plans to establish a National Commission for Empowerment of Women, as outlined in President Patil's June 4 opening speech to Parliament, and implement the Child Protection Scheme. Women's rights lobbyist Ranjana Kumari confided to Poloff that Tirath lacks the assertive nature of her predecessor, Renuka Chowdhury. However, Chowdhury herself told Poloff that she has high hopes for Tirath's tenure at the Ministry. Tirath, a Dalit, strongly supports the Women's Reservation Bill, which would reserve one-third of Lok Sabha seats for women.

Comment

16. (SBU) The ties that bind these three ministers are their loyalty to India's grand old party, the Congress. The appointments of Kharge and Tirath not only reward trusted and competent Congress politicians, but highlight the Congress's determination to have a strong Dalit presence at the center. Sibal seems the most promising of these three since he is active by nature, fully understands the urgent need to improve the dismal state of Indian education, and is eager to implement genuine reforms that are focused on results (Reftel).

BURLEIGH